

MUSEUM NEWS

JANUARY
1954
NUMBER 150



CHINESE EXPORT PORCELAIN FROM A SERVICE FOR THE PORTUGUESE
FAMILY OF SALDANHA DE ALBUQUERQUE.

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART
FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LINDEN

CHINESE EXPORT PORCELAIN

THE CONFUSING TERM 'Oriental' or 'Chinese Lowestoft' is the result of a well-known mistake in art history. For a century and a half this porcelain had been known as East India china—the ware made in China for the European and American markets according to Western models. While it was occasionally decorated in the Chinese taste, the shapes were always different from those made for home consumption. But about 1860 an English scholar assigned the enormous quantities of this porcelain to the little North Sea town of Lowestoft where there had indeed been a modest pottery from 1756 to 1806. The error was soon discovered, but the name Lowestoft has stuck despite the introduction of 'Chinese Export Porcelain' as a more exact term.

The collection of Export Porcelain formed by the late Helena Woolworth McCann numbered more than 3500 pieces. After her death in 1938, her children established the Winfield Foundation in memory of their mother, and the collection was divided between the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. During the last few years representative selections from Mrs. McCann's collection have been lent by the Foundation to other American museums. Toledo has received one hundred twenty pieces, which are now on exhibition.

Chinese porcelains were known and prized in the West from ancient times, but they remained rarities even after the Portuguese discovered the direct sea route to China in 1514. For the next two hundred years the blue and white, 'famille verte' and 'famille rose' wares of the Ming (1368-1644) and Ching (1644-1910) dynasties reached Europe in ever increasing quantities, and after 1700, in answer to a steady demand, porcelain made expressly for Western use was systematically exported by the East India companies. These were organizations established in several

countries of Europe whose shrewd investors saw fat profits in supplying the Western market with goods from the fantastic Orient. Tea, silk, spices, porcelain, lacquer, paintings on wallpaper, and glass, enamels, and ivory carvings were unloaded on the wharves of London, Amsterdam, Lisbon, Copenhagen and Goteborg to satisfy the fashionable caprice for Asiatic luxuries and 'chinoiserie' decoration. The English East India Company received its charter from Queen Elizabeth I in 1600, but for a hundred years its attention was directed toward India. Throughout the eighteenth century it was by far the largest of the trading companies in China, and in India it existed as a sort of autonomous government, complete with private army until the great rebellion of 1857.

After 1715 the South China port of Canton became the principal, and, after 1757, the only trading port open to Europeans. Imperial policy during the eighteenth century increasingly sought to seal off the ponderous and crumbling Manchu rule from dangerous foreign influences. The 'hongs' or agency-warehouses of the East India companies were located at Canton. Porcelain was an important commodity which was brought down to Canton by winding waterways and over a mountain pass from the town of Ching-te-chen, two hundred miles to the north. This has been for centuries the world's greatest center of porcelain production, as it is located near rich deposits of the necessary raw materials, kaolin and petuntse. Father Entrecolles, a Jesuit priest, visited Ching-te-chen in 1712 and wrote letters containing descriptions of the place and of the techniques employed in what seemed to Europeans the mysterious art of porcelain manufacture. "The sight with which one is greeted . . . consists of volumes of smoke and flame rising in different places, so as to define all the outlines



FROM A SERVICE FOR THE GERMAN DUCAL FAMILY OF ANHALT, LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (Center and Left). PLATES FOR THE DANISH MARKET WITH SYMBOLS COMMEMORATING A MARRIAGE. MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (Right).

of the town; approaching at nightfall, the scene reminds one of a burning city in flames, or of a huge furnace with many vent-holes." The population numbered over half a million and the division of labor recalls modern industrial practice: "They tell me that a piece of porcelain, when it comes out from the kiln, has passed through the hands of seventy workmen." Although work of the most exquisite delicacy was performed at the Imperial kilns, the only decoration applied to the export ware was the underglaze blue. After arriving at Canton the painting with polychrome enamels and refiring was carried out under the eyes of the foreign merchants. A famous compilation of writings on porcelain manufacture had this to say in 1815: "Foreign pieces are exclusively for sale overseas. The traders sell them to foreign devils to fill their markets. The shapes are usually very strange and there is no fixed pattern from year to year." The Chinese cared little for this ware with its often heavy and coarse body, the better to survive rough handling and act as ships' ballast. The styles in ornament applied at Canton were direct reflections of European modes, and by the last part of the eighteenth century there was little to distinguish the export ware from the products of Meissen or Derby except for the body and glaze which retained their traditional soft brilliance in the best quality work. Rococo and neo-classical engravings were faithfully copied, often with humorous results, or Western motifs might be combined with Chinese ornament with surprisingly harmonious results. The McCann Collection is especially rich in the armorial and monogrammed porcelains and the group in Toledo includes dishes for English, Portuguese, German and Danish families. Pieces



CUP AND SAUCER SHOWING
AN AMERICAN SHIP, ABOUT 1800



FROM A SERVICE FOR THE ENGLISH
FAMILY OF NEWMAN. LAST QUARTER
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

from an enormous service made for the Portuguese family of Saldanha de Albuquerque in the third quarter of the eighteenth century bear a ham as the central motif, surrounded by fishing and hunting scenes and trophies of game, vegetables, fruit and seafood, all executed in natural colors. This service is unique in having enamelled copper dish covers which point up the fact that enamelling in a full range of colors was first done on metal and was probably introduced into China by French Jesuit missionaries in the sixteenth century, who brought with them enamelled plaques from Limoges bearing religious subjects.

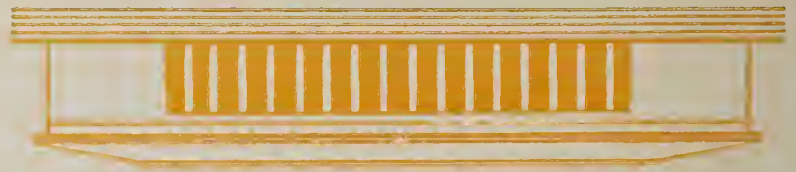
Americans did not get into the 'China Trade' until 1784 when ships from New York and Salem were the first to reach Canton from the new republic. Yankee shrewdness overcame the lack of ready money and stops were made on the Oregon coast to pick up sea otter pelts and in the Sandwich or Hawaiian Islands for sandalwood, both greatly valued in China. Best of all, a root that commonly grew in New England called ginseng was considered almost priceless among Chinese who esteemed it for magical curative properties. Soon porcelain bearing the American eagle appeared on American tables. A saucer bears a bird more like a chicken than the noble national symbol, but on a hot water dish, the direct ancestor of the utensil which keeps a baby's food warm, the eagle appears in respectable plumage surrounded by brilliant orange ornament. A cup and saucer show an American ship such as the painter must have often seen in the Whampoa anchorage at Canton. Perhaps it was a handsome souvenir for a captain to take home to his family.

Little Export Porcelain was brought into America or Europe after 1820, as about that time the industry seems to have gone into a general artistic decline, and the potteries of Staffordshire were producing earthenwares so cheap that they could even undersell the coolie labor of Ching-te-chen.

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EXHIBITIONS

IMPRESSIONISM IN AMERICAN ART

Forty paintings representing twenty-three American artists have been assembled by the Santa Barbara, California, Museum of Art for exhibition in five American museums during 1954. The exhibition has its first showing in the Toledo Museum during January. Included are pictures representing works between 1870 and 1925 by Gifford Beal, Cecelia Beaux, George Bellows, Frank Boggs, Philip Hale, Childe Hassam, Robert Henri, Winslow Homer, Eastman Johnson, Ernest Lawson, Willard Metcalf, Maurice Prendergast, Theodore Robinson, Everett Shinn, John Sloan, Robert Spencer, John W. Twachtman, Eugene L. Vail, J. Alden Weir, Mary Cassatt, William Merritt, Arthur B. Davies and William Glackens.

CHINESE EXPORT PORCELAIN

Lent by the Winfield Foundation, this interesting collection of more than one hundred pieces, is fully discussed in this Museum News.

PAINTINGS BY GEORGE JENSEN CRAFTS BY LEAH A. VOGEL

Two well-known Toledo artists currently exhibit their work jointly in Gallery 8. George Jensen, painter and teacher, has exhibited for a longer period than any other local artist, having had his first one-man show in the Toledo Museum in 1913. Since then he has been a regular exhibitor in the annual shows. Mrs. Vogel, a talented craftsman in many fields, shows chiefly metal work, enamel and jewelry.